UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General expresses condolences to Government and people of Azerbaijan after subway accident leaves 286 dead.
- Human rights situation in Haiti continues to improve despite sporadic reports of ill treatment of detainees and abuse of power by State agents, Secretary-General says.
- Expansion of UNOMIL for six months will cost $28 million, including $10 million in non-recurrent costs, Secretary-General reports.
- FAO Conference adopts $650 million Programme of Work and Budget for 1996-1997 without opposition.
- Co-Chairman of ICFY has meetings with Croatian Serb authorities and Croatian Government officials in effort to resolve situation in Eastern Slavonia.
- Administrative and Budgetary Committee concludes debate on 1996-1997 budget and discussions on medium-term plan and pattern of conferences.
- Special Political and Decolonization Committee approves draft resolution on United Nations public information activities.
- Fourteen States pledge $280,000 for United Nations disarmament information trust funds.
- Major-General Gian Santillo of Italy named as new Force Commander of UNIKOM.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today expressed his condolences to the Government and people of Azerbaijan after a subway accident in Baku on Saturday left 286 people dead and 269 injured.

(more)

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The human rights situation in Haiti continued to improve in recent months and the number of rights violations remained low, according to the Secretary-General. In a report to the General Assembly dated 12 October, he said fundamental freedoms were enjoyed by all sections of society, including by opponents of the President and the Government. Efforts to improve the justice and penal systems had proceeded apace, as had the deployment of the new Haitian National Police (HNP). Acts of summary "justice" meted out by the population to individuals caught while committing crimes, though still prevalent, had decreased considerably.

Nevertheless, the Secretary-General continued, there had been sporadic reports of ill treatment of detainees and of abuse of power by State agents. The weakness of the judiciary and the often arbitrary nature of decisions and actions continued to be a source of concern in the area of respect for legal and constitutional guarantees. Since January, the International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH) had examined some 20 killings that might have had a political context. The victims appeared to have been targeted for assassination, rather than for robbery.

The Secretary-General said he would formulate a recommendation for an extension of MICIVIH's mandate beyond 7 February 1996 if requested by the Haitian Government. He would also recommend that the Mission's terms of reference be adjusted to place greater emphasis on technical cooperation with the Government in the area of institution-building, in particular in the judicial and penal fields, and on the promotion and protection of human rights. The size and composition of MICIVIH's staff would be reassessed in consultation with the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States (OAS) to reflect the new emphasis of its work.

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The expansion of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) for a six-month period will cost $27.6 million, including $10.3 million in non-recurrent costs, according to the Secretary-General. In an addendum to his recent report on the Mission, he said the current cost of the expansion was $2.9 million per month, in addition to the current maintenance cost of $1.4 million. Accordingly, the total cost for maintaining UNOMIL for six months would amount to $36 million.

The cost estimate for the expansion of the Mission provided for an increase in the current budgeted strength of 90 military observers, 51 international staff and 103 United Nations Volunteers, the Secretary-General noted. Most of the additional civilian staffing was for the disarmament and demobilization programme.

(more)

In a related development, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs described Friday's Conference on Assistance to Liberia as an encouraging first step in building international support for the Liberian peace process. Several governments and the European Union said they would make substantial resources available for humanitarian assistance, disarmament and demobilization, the reintegration of former combatants, and the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Observer Group (ECOMOG).

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The governing Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has adopted a $650 million Programme of Work and Budget for the biennium 1996-1997. It took that action in Rome on Friday, by adopting an unopposed resolution. Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States abstained from voting. The budget for 1994-1995 was $673 million.

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The Co-Chairman of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, Thorvald Stoltenberg, and the United States Ambassador to Croatia, Peter Galbraith, had meetings with the Croatian Serb authorities in Eastern Slavonia on Saturday, and with Croatian Government officials on Sunday. A United Nations spokesman said they discussed proposals for a resolution of the situation in Eastern Slavonia within the framework of the 11 guiding principles agreed to by the parties earlier this month.

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The Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) has approved a draft resolution by which the General Assembly would authorize the Secretary-General to begin preparing and submit to its next session the proposed medium-term plan for the period after 1997. The Committee took that action as it concluded its general discussion on the plan and on the pattern of conferences. It also concluded its debate on the proposed 1996-1997 budget.

According to the draft resolution, the Secretary-General would base his proposals on recommendations from the thirty-fourth session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). He would also consider the views expressed in the Fifth Committee.

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The Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) has approved a draft resolution by which the Secretary-General would be asked to ensure the involvement of the Department of Public Information (DPI) at the planning stage of future peace-keeping and other field missions. The draft on "United Nations public information policies and activities" would have the General

Assembly consolidate the role of the Committee on Information as its main body mandated to make resolutions relating to the DPI's work.

By the terms of a second draft on "information in service of humanity", States and specialized agencies would be urged to reaffirm their commitment to the principles of the Charter and the principles of freedom of the press and information. States and organizations would also be urged to cooperate to reduce disparities in information flows by increasing assistance for the development of communications infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries.

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Fourteen countries pledged almost $280,000 for disarmament trust funds at the thirteenth Pledging Conference for the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme on Friday. Three other countries indicated their intention to pledge at a later date.

Of the total, $163,000 was pledged to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; $41,000 to the trust fund of the Disarmament Information Programme; and $76,000 to the trust fund for the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament.

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The Secretary-General has decided to appoint Major-General Gian Giuseppe Santillo of Italy as Force Commander of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM). Major-General Santillo will take up his functions on 1 December, succeeding Major-General Krishna Thapa.

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